PART III

ARMY REGULATIONS
(1800-1880)

13

EVERY ROOM OCCUPIED AS BARRACKS

(1800-1812)

On April 28, 1801, Secretary of War Henry Dearborn issued "Regulations [t]o be observed in the allowance of Barracks or Quarters to the Officers of the Army, and in the delivery and distribution of Fuel and Straw to the garrisons on the sea coast and recruiting parties."[1] As the title implies, those were not regulations for barracks, and indeed it does not appear that the War Department believed itself conjoined to provide barracks for enlisted men at all; quarters allowances were set forth only for officers.

On the same day Dearborn also promulgated "Regulations Respecting certain Supplies and Objects of special and extra Expense."[2] They established the limits of army supply and allowed the six categories of supplies that the Army afforded itself to be provided by subsistence contractors in the absence of an officer of the Quartermaster Department:

> The several Contractors, besides rations including ardent spirits and vinegar, shall only provide and furnish Quarters, Transportation, Forage, Fuel, Straw and Stationery to recruiting parties where there is no appropriate officer of the Quarter Master General's Department to furnish the same. The quarters intended, are those of a temporary kind. The power to provide them shall not extend to the building or repairing of barracks. In what they furnish, they shall govern themselves exclusively by the regulations which have been established by law or by the War Department, and in cases to which no regulations apply, by the orders of the particular commanding officer.
>
> No repairs shall be made to any barracks or buildings which shall incur a disbursement of money exceeding fifty dollars, but by an order of the Secretary of War.[3]

Before 1812, therefore, the Army's regulations did not require that its men be housed in barracks, except at "permanent" posts, few of which it possessed. Instead, most of the Army was regarded as in the field, and outfitted accordingly. It was revealed in 1812 that the equipage supplied to the men for field service included tents, iron kettles, and tin pans. So the pattern established during the Revolution remained in force up to 1812: The men lived in tents in the summers and in huts during the winters.

In ratifying that custom, the 1801 regulations on the issue of firewood reveal inadvertently that the men's huts were assumed to house groups of eight, as had those at New Windsor two decades before. Fuel was issued to enlisted men from the first of October through the first of April as follows:

> To every room occupied as barracks by eight non-commissioned officers, musicians and privates, one cord per month.
>
> To a garrison barrack guard, half a cord per month.
>
> To the sick in hospital, the allowance of wood is to be regulated by the surgeon.

Those allowances were cut in half the rest of the year. In addition, they could be reduced or increased by the commanding general "under special circumstances."[4] The only change in fuel allowances before 1812 came May 1, 1806, when the secretary authorized additional fuel at posts, garrisons, and recruiting rendezvous north of the 39th parallel:

> To every room occupied by eight men, half a cord per month.
>
> To a garrison or quarter guard, half a cord per month.[5]

The 1801 regulations on straw suggest that the two-man palliasse, or bedsack, was also accepted as customary--but probably only in buildings, or winter quarters, as in later years they were not issued officially

except in garrison. From 1801 to 1812, the following was the straw allowance:

> 1. One truss of straw weighing thirty six pounds, is allowed for each palliass for two men. At the expiration of sixteen days, each palliass is to be refreshed with eight pounds. At the expiration of thirty two days, the whole straw is to be removed, and a fresh bedding of one truss to be furnished, and so on, every succeeding period of sixteen and thirty two days.
>
> 2. The same quantity of straw is allowed for servants or batmen not soldiers, and for washer-women attached to each company in the proportion of one washer-woman to every seventeen non-commissioned officers and privates.
>
> 3. The straw is to be changed for the sick in the hospital as often as may be deemed necessary: this necessity to be determined by the surgeon, or surgeon's mate, in the absence of the surgeon.[6]

The entire purpose of the early regulations was to control the expenditure of public money. Therefore, the issue of fuel and straw was tightly controlled. They could be drawn only during the month they were to be used, and measured according to the number of men for which they were requisitioned, with reductions for men not present. There was also ample provision of otherwise reducing quantities.[7]

With the Army not feeling itself called upon to provide barracks for most of its men, little about the interior arrangements of the buildings can be derived from the regulations in effect before 1812. Some things, however, can be inferred. The common soldier hut was probably little changed from the time of the Revolution--many of the officers, after all, were veterans of that war--except that at forts they would have been built in series, with common walls, and against the stockades. The typical hut was probably built of logs or puncheons set in trenches.

Roofing, since the straw issue was a difficult item of supply on the frontier, probably was either brush and mud, or rough boards. Quartermasters supplied hand tools for the construction of winter quarters, if tools were available. Since the straw allowance (when actually met) was generous, any bunks or palliasses would have been large or deep. On everything else, the regulations were silent.

A few contents of the huts can be surmised from military custom. The issue of blankets to soldiers had been traditional since ancient times. Each man had one blanket--two men shared two blankets--which in this period was usually wool, sometimes cotton, white, with a blue stripe near each end, and by 1808 three 5-inch points (blue) at one end, with the nap raised on one side.[8] The blankets were lighter than those of later years, weighed 3 to 3½ pounds each, measured 4 to 4½ by 6 feet, and probably soon became filthy and then disintegrated rapidly in field service.

Other contents would have been a few candles, which were supposed to be among the undependable supplies of rations, and kettles and (it can be guessed) a few pans from the camp and garrison equipage. That much the Army would furnish, but probably no more.

The quarters were heated with open fireplaces, probably built annually of mud and sticks, and intended for cooking as well as heating. The presence of hooks, cranes, and possibly trivets or spiders must also be supposed, along with hatchets and boxes for firewood, but again the regulations were silent.

The only other attempts at governance of barracks contents before 1812 came in the rare decisions to erect "permanent" quarters. Evidently the War Department believed that it did have an obligation to provide barracks at permanent posts, as witnessed in Dearborn's instructions on the construction of Fort Detroit in 1815:

> But, if brick cannot be made in the vicinity of the Fort, other materials should be procured . . . for erecting two

> barracks, each sixty two feet in length, twenty in width, and one and a half story in heighth; each barrack to be divided into four rooms, exclusive of the half story, which should be occupied for lodging rooms. Each lower room should have a large fire place, with a closet on one side, and a stair way on the other, to ascend to the lodging rooms; and should also have two windows of twenty squares of 7 by 9 glass each. To each upper room there should be one lutheran [luthern] window of twelve squares of like glass. The walls of the half story should not exceed 3-1/2 feet in heighth.[9]

It can be inferred from Dearborn's orders that at permanent posts men lived in larger groups and slept in lofts--probably without bunks--and that the Army would, employing troop labor, afford a certain degree of comfort to the soldiers. But besides the benches and tables that they must build for themselves (not mentioned), the furniture that the men would receive from the Army would remain only their blankets, candles, and camp and garrison equipage.

Dearborn also proposed the erection of a guardhouse "of one story, and about 15 feet square. The walls of the guard house should be built of square timber of nine inches thickness."[10] What that structure would contain, if anything, is open to speculation.

But few men of the Army lived at places like Detroit before 1812. For the rest, the closest to a War Department policy on housing was Dearborn's declaration that it was not "useful or expedient to construct expensive works for our interior military posts . . . ." He required that frontier posts be simple stockades 120 feet square, with a pair of blockhouses on opposite corners, and containing the simplest quarters and storehouses.[11] That the winter hut persisted was because it was traditional and necessary, not because it was a subject of regulation.

Notes

1. Printed in 1808 Regulations, 44-48.

2. Ibid., 49-50.

3. Ibid., 49.

4. Ibid., 44-45.

5. Ibid., 48-49.

6. Ibid., 46.

7. Ibid., 47-48.

8. Blankets are discussed separately below. This summary description is based on contracts let in 1808 and 1811, in QMC on File--Blankets, RG92. The appearance of blankets was not governed by regulations, apparently, until the 1860s.

9. Dearborn to Commanding Officer at Detroit, Aug. 5, 1805, quoted in Prucha, Sword of the Republic, 173-74.

10. Ibid., 174.

11. Dearborn to Gen. James Wilkinson, June 28, 1804, quoted in ibid., 173.

14

ANY BUILDING OCCUPIED BY TROOPS AS A BARRACK

(1812-1818)

In 1812 Congress and the War Department overhauled the general regulations of the Army, publishing the revision the following year.[1] They were a considerably more detailed volume of rules than had existed before, and for the first time in its history the Army formally provided for housing for the enlisted men: "To twelve non-commissioned officers, musicians, or privates, one room, or (in the summer) a kitchen."[2] That also reflected abandonment of the New Windsor precedent; now the Army supplied its soldiers in groups of six and housed them in dozens. It is reasonable to suppose that that reflected actual construction practices on the frontier, since a combination of influences made 12-man rooms more practical than eight-man quarters. In addition, the new regulations revealed a concerted effort to reduce expenses. Issuing the same quantities of firewood to 12 men as formerly had gone to eight would produce a significant savings.

Even though quarters were built by the men, using tools lent for the purpose, they remained public property. The soldiers and their officers were enjoined to take care of them:

> When any building occupied by troops as a barrack shall have been left by them in a filthy state, or shall have suffered injury by them, the Quartermaster of the post or of the party succeeding to them, shall, in the one case, have the quarters cleansed, and in the other repaired; and the expense of doing so shall be deducted from the pay of the officers commanding the party which immediately preceded in the occupation of the buildings, so cleansed and repaired.[3]

The chief purpose of the regulations remained the control of public expenditures. "Straw for soldiers' bedding" was one of only six

categories of articles that quartermasters were allowed to purchase. The others were forage; fuel; stationery; horses, carts, wagons, and boats; and boards, nails, and other materials to build or repair barracks, hospitals, and bridges.[4] To contain expenses, the issue of fuel and straw was controlled rigourously:

> Requisitions for fuel or straw must state the number and rank of the officers, the number of non-commissioned officers and privates, servants, batmen, and washerwomen, for whom it may be demanded, and certified by the commandant of the regiment, garrison, or recruiting rendezvous.
>
> No fuel or straw shall be drawn for officers, or for soldiers, whilst on furlough; nor any allowance made to them for the same.[5]

Wood for fuel was issued according to the number of kitchens "or room occupied for cooking," which when compared with the quarters allowance suggests that the men cooked in their quarters in the winters. The fuel allowance was one cord per month in the summer in the north, and all year south of the Ohio River, and one and one-half cords per month in the north during the winter. It could be drawn only in the month it was to be used.[6]

Regarding other items furnished to the men, Congress on January 11, 1812 showed its diligent economy by fixing the ration of candles at 1½ pounds and of soap at 4 pounds, each to every 100 rations.[7] That small allowance remained the basic rule for many decades thereafter.

The palliasse disappeared from the regulations without mention of a replacement, although it is known that the word "bedsack" was in use by 1811 and that the Purchasing Department was manufacturing bedsacks before 1817. But according to the regulations, straw alone was issued for bedding, at the rate of one truss of 36 pounds for every two men, refreshed with an additional 8 pounds after 16 days, then replaced with a new truss after 32 days, and so on--except for the vanished palliasse, the same as before, with some other minor changes in wording.[8]

Camp and garrison equipage for the men was enumerated for the first time in the new regulations, but only by indirection in the rules of governing provision of transportation: "To each company or detachment of 100 men, shall be allowed one four-horse waggon and team, or 2 two-horse waggons and teams, for the conveyance of baggage, and camp equipage consisting of one common tent, one iron kettle, and two tin pans, for every six men."[9]

Accordingly, if the regulations are to be a guide, during the years after 1812 the men were housed in the summers in six-man tents, each company being allowed a kitchen structure of some sort. In the winters they hutted up in groups of a dozen, furnishing themselves with wooden objects (none of which the regulations acknowledged) as circumstances permitted. Each barrack would include in its furnishings for 12 soldiers two iron kettles and four tin pans for food that could be cooked in the room's primitive fireplace. No more than 1½ pounds of soft candles would be available to light the room every eight days, less those required for guardrooms and other spaces. And the men were supposed to keep their quarters clean, at least when they vacated them.

Notes

1. 1813 Regulations.
2. Ibid., 205.
3. Ibid., 203-04.
4. Ibid., 203.
5. Ibid., 208-09.
6. Ibid., 205-07.
7. Ibid., 75.
8. Ibid., 208.
9. Ibid., 209.

15

STRAW IS NOT A PERSONAL ALLOWANCE

(1819-1838)

The general regulations issued in 1812 and 1813 governed the Army until March 2, 1821. The only official action during that period that affected the appearance of barracks contents occurred in January 1821, when the secretary of war approved the suggestion of Callender Irvine that thereafter each army blanket be marked in the center "with the letters U.S. with indelible liquid." The purpose was to discourage theft and sale of the blankets by soldiers, and from that time on the national initials were distinctive on army blankets.[1]

The new general regulations adopted in 1821 were the work of Winfield Scott, who evidenced in them not only respect for War Department frugality, but his own experience and opinions on such matters as sanitation. For example, he went beyond requiring that field camps be kept free of filth (a virtue in which armies traditionally fell short) to demand that the soldiers themselves be tidy in their persons. Uniforms were to be kept clean and underwear was to be changed three times a week in midsummer and twice a week (Sundays and Thursdays) the rest of the year. The men should wash their hands and faces daily after fatigue, "shave themselves (if necessary), and brush or comb their heads."[2]

Regarding barracks, units and their quarters were to be inspected twice a week by various officers, who in addition were required to make daily "visits" to quarters and "frequent general visits, in the course of the month" to hospitals, guardhouses, and other buildings.[3] The purpose of the inspections and visitations was to ensure that things were arranged as the regulations said they should be.

The "chambers" housing the men were to be numbered according to the numbers of the units occupying them, "and the numbers inscribed on the

outer doors." In addition, the "name of each soldier will be labelled on his bunk, in the place most apparent . . . ." The regulations said that the quarters should contain arm racks, which were to be used in prescribed fashion: "Fire arms will be habitually placed, (the cock let down, and the bayonet in its scabbard) in the arm-racks; the accoutrements suspended over the firelocks; swords hung by the belts, on pegs."[4]

The bunks were by indirection to have shelves, a lower to hold knapsacks and an upper for clothing, folded in prescribed fashion. In addition, "shoes, after being well cleaned and tied together, soles out [were to be] hung on a peg over the bolster." The men were specifically forbidden from putting "any article whatever under the bedding."[5]

The regulations also recognized the presence in barracks of other, miscellaneous contents:

> Cooking and table utensils, after being well cleaned, will be arranged in closets or recesses. Blacking, whiting, and brushes, will be placed as much out of sight as practicable; the whiting pot well covered.
>
> When there is a necessity of keeping a supply of fuel in the chambers, it will be put in boxes near the fire places.
>
> Bread will be placed on shelves prepared for the purpose. Fresh meat hung out at the back windows on hooks--but not in the sun.[6]

The regulations acknowledged that circumstances could prevent absolute conformity with their requirements but demanded that "the spirit of them will be adhered to, in order to establish a convenient uniformity in all the chambers . . . Accordingly, as often as the troops change quarters, a chamber will be established as a model for the others." Finally, the rooms were to be kept scrupulously clean:

> Unless under special circumstances, Saturdays will be more particularly appropriated to police. The chiefs of squads will cause bunks and bedding to be over-haled; floors to be washed, sanded, or scoured; arms to be cleaned; accoutrements to be whitened and polished; and ever thing else to be put into the most exact state of order and neatness.[7]

The officers of the Quartermaster Department remained hemmed in by restrictions and as limited as before in what they could purchase, which except upon special authorization was only

> all forage, fuel, straw, and stationery, for the use of the troops transported and issued agreeably to the regulations; . . . dragoon and artillery horses, and horses, oxen, wagons, carts, and boats, for the transportation of baggage; . . . boards, plank, nails, and other materials for constructing and repairing barracks, hospitals, and bridges.[8]

The quartermasters' oversight of the condition of barracks was more carefully guarded by the 1821 regulations:

> All public barracks and quarters are under the direction of the officers of the quartermaster's department, and shall be assigned by them to the officers and troops of the army, agreeably to the regulations. For any damage sustained after barracks or quarters shall have been so assigned, the officer commanding the regiment, company, or detachment, occupying them, shall be held accountable; and he shall cause them to be repaired at his own expense, or that of the individual or individuals by whom the damage was done. No repairs shall be made at the expense of the United States, but by direction and under the superintendence of the officers of the quartermaster's department; and no expenditure on that account shall be made by <u>them</u>, at permanent posts, in time of peace, when the whole

> sum required to complete the work shall exceed one hundred dollars, without the special sanction of the secretary of war, communicated through the quartermaster general: nor shall expenditures thus made exceed, for any post, the sum of three hundred dollars per annum, without such sanction.[9]

Similar restrictions pertained to quarters left "in a filthy state," or in need of repair, by troops leaving them, and it was almost inevitable that the Army would in the regulations formalize its habitual reluctance to build permanent quarters: "No permanent barracks or quarters shall be erected at the expense of the United States, but by order of the secretary of war."[10]

The fuel allowance was altered again, reverting to allocation to men instead of to rooms. This time fuel was issued to men in groups of six, one-half cord per month from May through October, one cord per month from November through April, with an additional one-fourth cord per month in December, January, and February north of 40°. Since the men still lived chiefly in groups of 12, as was plainly implied in the regulations, the fuel allowance remained substantially as before, except that the winter season was shortened and the line for extra winter wood moved north from the Ohio River to the 40th parallel (making some reduction of the army total). There was a new option, however: "Coal may be issued, in lieu of wood, in proportion to the cost thereof." As before, fuel could be drawn only in the month for which it was to be used.[11] Finally, "at all posts in the vicinity of public or Indian lands, which afford fire-wood, the necessary fuel will be provided by fatigue parties detailed from the troops, under the direction of the several commanding officers."[12]

Perhaps the greatest change affecting the men's accommodations that appeared in the 1821 regulations was the reduction of the straw allowance virtually by half:

> One truss of straw, weighing eighteen pounds, is allowed to every two men, at the commencement of the month. At the

expiration of fifteen days, each truss will be refreshed with four pounds, and at the expiration of the month the whole straw will be removed, and a fresh bedding of one truss will be furnished.

The same quantity of straw is allowed to servants, or bat men, not soldiers, and for washerwomen, in the proportion of one to every seventeen men.

The allowance and change of straw for the sick in hospitals, will be regulated by the senior attending surgeon.[13]

The drastic reduction in the straw allowance suggests that in 1821 or shortly after the common army bunk assumed the narrow width that would be reported at posts in the next two decades. While bunks probably were wider when the men received 36 pounds of straw in the initial issue (and assuming that bunks were present at all), after 1821 the bunks seldom exceeded 3 feet in width, to accommodate two men.

The principal reason for the reduced allowance probably had nothing to do with changing bunk dimensions--which likely were an accommodation either to more crowding or to the smaller straw issue or both--but instead reflected the Army's ceaseless search for ways to cut expenses. The new straw allotment cost half as much to buy and ship as the earlier one.

There were other ways the cost of straw could be curtailed: "At all posts in the vicinity of prairies belonging to the public, hay will be used in lieu of straw, and shall be provided by the troops."[14] At the posts where the men filled their bedding with prairie hay, the bedbugs, lice, and other pests already inhabiting the bunks would thereafter enjoy the company of sand fleas, chiggers, ticks, and other visitors from the outdoors.

Bedsacks were not yet specifically to be issued to men in garrison or winter quarters, although they were already a major item of procurement and, presumably, supply. But other articles of camp and garrison

equipage, which made their way into the men's quarters, were enumerated:

> To every six non-commissioned officers, musicians, and privates, including the authorized number of washerwomen and servants, one common tent, one iron kettle, two tin pans, and one hatchet; and to each company six axes and four spades . . . . In lieu of kettles, iron pots may be furnished to troops in garrison.[15]

Finally, the 1821 regulations offered one last miserly touch by requiring that

> all casks and boxes, in which clothing, camp equipage, and other stores may be received, shall be carefully preserved and returned to the quartermaster, who shall cause them to be sold, and account for the proceeds in his next quarterly account.[16]

The clear implication of that instruction was that the soldiers would not be allowed to improve their barracks with wood taken from shipping containers.

If the regulations were any reflection of reality, soldiers after 1821 were expected to live in barracks much as they had since 1812, in groups of 12. Their lives were more carefully supervised, and in general they were to arrange themselves as they would on campaign, according to order of battle, with unit numbers on the doors and the men's names on bunks and equipment. Each soldier had a certain zone prescribed for him in space and time, and in that zone he maintained his bed, clothing, and weapons in harmony with a bunkmate. Arm racks, like bunks, were now acknowledged but not specifically required; and it can be supposed that they were closely associated with the bunks (to which, in addition, shelves and shoepegs were to be affixed). The possible presence of additional room contents like benches, tables, and cleaning implements was accepted by the regulations, but not demanded. If they were there, they were to be kept clean.

Camp and garrison equipage present in quarters was more carefully enumerated, and therefore accounted for, but the issue of bedsacks in garrison was at most a matter of custom, not regulation. The greatest change from earlier days was the smaller allowance of straw for bedding. Finally, troops were clearly allowed to cook with pots instead of camp kettles when they were in barracks--assuming the agreement (and adequate budget) of the post quartermaster.

Except at the rare "permanent" posts, army barracks life was merely a wooden variation on camp life, and the soldiers were always on campaign. When they were in barracks, they lived under the same discipline that governed them in the field. Since such conditions were "temporary," albeit year-round, the absence of amenities, like enough candles to read by or sufficient firewood to heat rooms, as well as food could be excused.

Winfield Scott continued to perfect the regulations, and a new edition was adopted in 1825.[17] But as they pertained to the life of men in quarters, they were unchanged from 1821. Junior officers received a little more fuel in the winters, but not the men, whose issue of straw and list of camp and garrison equipage were unaltered.

No effort was made to prescribe uniform standards even for barracks fixtures as essential as bunks and arm racks during this period. In 1826 an inspector general asked that standard drawings and instructions be prepared and distributed, but there is no evidence that he received any response.[18]

The next revision of the general regulations appeared in 1835.[19] Concerning barracks life, these regulations were somewhat more concise but unchanged in essential details. The most outstanding difference from the regulations of the 1820s was that the day for cleaning the barracks was changed to Friday.[20] The issue of blankets was formalized; the soldier received one in the first year of his three-year enlistment, another in the second, but none in the third.[21]

There were some additional statements in the 1835 regulations that, although they did not alter previous practices, revealed some changes in official attitudes. The Army now acknowledged that it would permit the men to outfit their quarters with basic furniture:

> Materials shall be furnished at the public expense for bunks, benches, and tables, for soldiers' barracks, and hospitals, which shall be made under the direction of the officers of the Quarter Master's Department, by artificers drawn from the companies. These articles shall be considered as fixtures, and shall bear the numbers of the rooms for which they are provided, and shall not be removed, except by the authority of the officers of the Quarter Master's Department of the respective posts. Commanding officers of companies, and attending Surgeons, will receipt and be held accountable for them.[22]

In practical terms, there was probably little that was new in that statement, because it is likely that it merely ratified practices that had been going on for years. But it marked the first formal acknowledgement that the definition of most posts as "temporary" needed some qualification. If the barracks required furniture, then they were something more than wintertime substitutes for summer tents. The Army, although always in the field on campaign, might well have occasion to occupy certain places for some length of time. On the other hand, it should be noted that the regulations did not require the Army to provide any furniture to the men themselves. Furniture instead was supplied by troop labor to the buildings, and the men using it must take care of it.

Another new feature of the 1835 regulations, however, did show some regard for the soldiers' personal well-being. In repeating the established 18-pound straw allowance, the regulations offered a warning to those who saw it as a possible source of income:

> Straw is not a personal allowance or emolument--it is furnished to secure the health and comfort of the soldiers, and is not, on

> any account, to be sold for their benefit; if not used by those for whom it is provided, as bedding, it is to be returned to the Quarter Master's Department.[23]

Another gleam of dawning enlightenment was reflected in the fact that the regulations now promoted personal hygiene in the fullest sense:

> Bathing is recommended, and where conveniences for it are to be had, the men should be made to bathe at least once a week. The feet are to be washed always at least twice a week.[24]

In the real world of army ranks, barracks life and barracks furniture remained essentially unchanged by regulation, other influences aside, for two full decades after 1821--in fact, it can fairly be said that little of material import changed in the regulations for five decades, except in theoretical terms. But the Army did not desire always to be in "temporary" circumstances, in the field chasing Indians. Its aspirations were to become a permanent force for national defense, living in permanent quarters suitable for the accommodation of soldiers.

By the end of its first half-century of existence, the American Army had become very proficient at managing its men, leading them into combat, feeding, paying, supplying, and moving them, clothing and arming them--all the things necessary to a fighting force--despite a tradition of penury and the natural obstacles of an unsettled frontier--except for the one essential of decent housing.

On November 24, 1838, Secretary of War Poinsett moved the regulation of barracks an important step forward when he set forth the first comprehensive statement on how the Army's buildings were to be constructed:

> Rules and Regulations for insuring uniformity and a due economy in the construction of the permanent public buildings hereafter to be erected for the use of the Quartermaster's, Engineer, Ordnance, and all other departments of the army.

1st. Materials.--None but the best kind shall enter into the construction.

2nd. Workmanship.--Plain, workman-like, and free from all ornament not necessary to a neat finish.

3rd. Doors and Shutters.--Framed, flat pannels, with a bead round the rails. For posts, south of the 40th degree of latitude, Venitians may be substituted for the shutters to the quarters and barracks. For store and other houses, the doors and shutters shall be framed, and the pannels flush with the rails.

4th. Roofs, whenever practicable, shall be covered with zinc, tin, sheet iron, slate tile, or other durable and incombustible substances.

5th. Piazzas are allowed for places where the circumstances of climate and exposure, render their addition necessary to health and protection against the elements.

6th. Stairs.--For the exterior they shall consist, if attached to a stone or brick building, of stone; otherwise of wood, substantially put together. For the interior, of the best wood, plain, and finished in a workman-like manner, balustrade with plain balusters, and rail of mahogany or other hard wood.

7th. Interior work.--The size, manner of framing, etc., of the wood work, shall be regulated according to the dimensions of the building and to the service for which it is designed; the joists shall, however, in every instance, be firmly bridged; and those for the Quarters filled in between, with tar or some other non-conductor of sound. The masonry of the offsetts on which they rest should be carried up even to their upper surface. The floors tongued and grooved. Walls, plastered, and in cases of brick or stone quarters, furred with a hard finish.

> Door and window casings, and surbase, plain, with a moulding at the edge. Mantels, of marble, when they can be obtained cheap; or when this cannot be obtained cheap, of stone or some other incombustible material, and to consist of a plain slab, supported by corbels, pilasters, and plinth. Hearths, coarse marble, stone or brick, and the jambs and backs of the fire places may be protected by iron plates, fire-bricks, or soap-stone. Hinges, etc., shall be of iron, but of the best quality. The locks yellow mounted. Lights [window panes], for officers' quarters 12 x 14, and for barracks and storehouses, 10 x 12, Boston Crown, or of any other [glass], strong and cheap. Pitch of Rooms above the 40th degree of latitude, 12 feet; below that degree, 14 feet for the sitting, and 12 feet for the bed rooms. The sitting rooms may be ornamented by a small cornice. Wood work painted.
>
> 8th. No Building will hereafter be erected or repaired, or additions be made, under any of the Departments, but in fulfillment of plans and estimates previously submitted and approved by the Secretary of War.[25]

Except for items of interior finish, of course, the building regulations of 1838 did not address the subject of furniture. Nor did the regulations themselves, general as they were, apply to most military posts, but specifically to the erection of "permanent" buildings.

Notes

1. The Jan. 1821 correspondence between Irvine and Secretary Calhoun was first published in Military Collector and Historian, 13 (Winter 1961): 126, and is reproduced as an appendix in Kummerow and Brown, Enlisted Barracks at Fort Snelling.

2. 1821 Regulations, 47-48.

3. Ibid., 68.

4. Ibid., 68-69.

5. Ibid., 69.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., 69-70.

8. Ibid., 180.

9. Ibid., 181-82.

10. Ibid., 182.

11. Ibid., 188-89.

12. Ibid., 189.

13. Ibid., 194.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 194-95.

16. Ibid., 196.

17. 1825 Regulations.

18. Col. George Croghan, Aug. 1826, quoted in Kummerow and Brown, Enlisted Barracks at Fort Snelling, 12.

19. 1835 Regulations.

20. Ibid., 24.

21. Ibid., 209.

22. Ibid., 147.

23. Ibid., 152.

24. Ibid., 13.

25. Building Regulations 1838.

16

PUBLIC FURNITURE IN BARRACKS AND QUARTERS (1839-1860)

The next revision of the Army's general regulations appeared in 1841.[1] As they affected barracks life, they remained essentially as before, the major alteration being the return of cleaning day to Saturday. There was, however, a slightly stronger statement on personal hygiene:

> Bathing is promotive both of comfort and health; and where conveniences for it are to be had, the men should be made to bathe at least once a week. The feet are to be washed at least twice a week.[2]

That was no more a requirement than the previous entry on the subject, but the explanation of the purpose of bathing marked the growing influence of the army surgeons.

The next revision of the general regulations in 1847 left those affecting barracks life mostly unchanged. The 1847 volume was shorter, and for staff departments, including the Quartermaster and Medical Departments, simply continued the 1841 provisions in force.[3]

On December 27, 1854, General Order 22 authorized the first general issue in barracks of an item of manufactured furniture:

> . . . Paragraph 974 of the General Regulations of 1841, is so far modified as to substitute single iron bedsteads for the wooden bunks prescribed by that paragraph, to be furnished by the Quartermaster Department.[4]

Although that provision affected subsequent revisions of the regulations, no subject so vividly illustrates the vast difference between the theory of regulations and the reality of field conditions than that of single iron

bedsteads for barracks. In actual practice, except for a few barrack rooms around New York City, manufactured bedsteads of any description were scarce in the Army until the 1870s.

But for the Medical Department, with its separate procurement authorities and well-developed hygienic sensibilities, iron bedsteads did not long remain, as they were in barracks, a subject of wishful thinking. The new hospital supply table issued in 1856 listed "Bedsteads, iron" among the articles to be purchased for post hospitals, and by the end of 1858 iron bedsteads were nearly universal at post hospitals, as shown on their property returns.[5]

New general regulations appeared in 1855 and again in substantially the same form in 1857.[6] As related to barracks and their contents, the new regulations featured the greatest changes of any issued since 1821 and reflected both the generally increasing size of barracks and a growing official willingness to treat men as individuals instead of in lumps of six, eight, or 12.

No longer was the 12-man room the accepted norm. Instead of rooms, each group of six soldiers was allotted space--225 square feet north of 38° and 256 square feet south of that latitude. That was the only such grouping of the men left in the regulations. For fuel each enlisted man individually was to be allotted one-twelfth cord of wood from May through September, and one-sixth cord from October through April (although it was actually drawn for the men in lots for their organizational or residential groups). Each guard fire received no more than three cords per month in the winters only. From November through February all fuel allotments were increased by one-fourth north of 39° and by one-third north of 43°. Finally, coal could be substituted for wood at the rate of 1,500 pounds of anthracite or 30 bushels of bituminous to the cord, with "merchantable hard wood" the standard."[7] These provisions suggest clearly that barracks were changing from clusters of small rooms to large common rooms for companies and that stoves were coming into increasingly general use.

The general requirements for barracks arrangement and cleanliness in the 1855 and 1857 regulations remained much as they had been in the past. But there was considerably more attention to detail in certain matters. The regulations defined "barracks and quarters" as "the permanent buildings for the use of the army, as barracks, quarters, hospitals, storehouses, offices, stables."[8] The same general principles were to apply to temporary quarters, to the extent that circumstances permitted.

Furniture, including the hypothetical iron bedsteads, continued to be governed as fixtures of buildings rather than supplies for the men. Now, instead of saying that materials would be provided to build furniture, it was suggested that it could be supplied from without:

> Bunks, benches, and tables provided for soldiers' barracks and hospitals, are not to be removed from them, except by the quartermaster of the station, or order of the commanding officer, and shall not be removed from the station except by order of the Quartermaster General.[9]

But old provisions, dating from the 1820s, about the placement of arms in arm racks and the arrangement of knapsacks and clothing on upper and lower shelves of bunks remained unaltered, suggesting that the authors of the regulations had no realistic expectations that single iron bedsteads would appear in significant numbers. Cleaning day remained Saturday, and the men themselves were to bathe "where conveniences for bathing are to be had," and keep themselves neat and clean.

But as related to certain matters, the regulations did not always treat the possibility of single iron bedsteads as remote. The straw allowance was now gauged to the individual soldier, rather than to pairs of men, and in a slightly greater volume than before:

> In barracks, twelve pounds of straw per month for bedding will be allowed to each man, servant, and company woman.

> The allowance and change of straw for the sick is regulated by the surgeon.
>
> One hundred pounds per month is allowed for bedding to each horse in public service.
>
> At posts near prairie land owned by the United States, hay will be used instead of straw, and provided by the troops.
>
> Straw not actually used as bedding shall be accounted for as other public property.[10]

The hypothetical single bunks did not affect the issue of blankets, although that had changed because of the alteration of enlistment periods. A soldier now got one blanket in the first year and another in the third year of a five-year enlistment.[11] And probably by 1855 the blanket had assumed the heavy weight, proportions, and gray color that would persist for decades.

For the first time, it became a matter of regulation that "bed-sacks are provided for troops in garrison, and iron pots may be furnished to them instead of camp kettles." "Mess pans," so-called, also made an appearance, to be issued five to every 15 foot soldiers or 13 mounted men.[12] Regarding kitchen utensils, "Those detailed for duty in the kitchens will also be required to keep the furniture of the mess-room in order."[13] That, incidentally, is the first official acknowledgment that barracks might be enlarging sufficiently to allow separate rooms for cooking and eating, although such practices had apparently been standard for some time.

The first use of the term "furniture" in its modern sense occurred in the 1855 and 1857 regulations: "The furniture for each office will be two common desks or tables, six common chairs, one pair common andirons, and shovel and tongs."[14] Some things, however, seemed destined never to change; the ration of candles and soap to each 100 rations remained 1½ pounds and 4 pounds, respectively.[15]

The general regulations were not revised again until the start of the Civil War. But their authors seemed aware that, as related to the quarters and fixtures furnished to the men, they too often had only a theoretical connection to realities at the posts, where low budgets and frequent moves created atrocious "temporary" conditions. The 1857 regulations admitted the limitations imposed by fiscal shortfalls, in charging the quartermasters with the duty of inspecting quarters monthly and when vacated: "Damages will be promptly repaired if the quartermaster has the means."[16] The difficulties of maintenance and repair at the military posts were compounded by the absence of any prescribed standards or uniform guidance for construction other than the 1838 building regulations.

Beginning in 1858, the Quartermaster Department set out to correct that deficiency, and in 1860 it issued Regulations Concerning Barracks and Quarters for the Army of the United States, 1860.[17] They were adopted by the War Department, which ordered them to be printed and distributed the following year. The first comprehensive statement governing the Army's quarters to appear after 1838, the new regulations were at their heart a recapitulation and compilation of all rules in force in any way related to army buildings, including some provisions that had been around for decades. However, they contained some important innovations as well.

The barracks regulations began by restating the assignment of responsibilities for construction. At permanent fortifications, barracks and quarters were to be built by the Engineer Department; but when occupied, the buildings were to be turned over to the Quartermaster Department for "preservation and assignment according to regulations, and will revert to the care of the Engineer Department when abandoned by the troops." The Quartermaster Department, on the other hand, was to build barracks "at interior posts, or cantonments, unconnected with permanent fortifications. . . ."[18]

The regulations also set forth the first general description of what a standard army barracks should be. It was to be an L-shaped structure, the "main building" 29 feet wide and long enough to house an office in

front and a storeroom in rear 13 feet 6 inches wide, together with two dormitories each 67 feet 8 inches long. The "back building" (wing) should be 20 feet wide and long enough to house a "washing room" (for laundry, not men) measuring 10 feet, a 40-foot mess room, and a 20-foot kitchen. If ground conditions warranted, the kitchen, mess room, and washing room could be installed in a basement beneath the main building. Quarters for a regimental band followed the same general plan except that they were smaller and held only one dormitory.[19]

Depending upon the size of a garrison, the regulations allowed one- and two-story guardhouses containing two sections. One housed a room for the officer of the guard and another for the men of the guard. Separated from those rooms by a transverse partition was to be the prison section, with a common prison room and a row of cells.[20]

The 1860 regulations were adaptable both to the traditonal, locally built furniture and to the issue of manufactured furniture: "Bunks, benches, and tables for soldiers' quarters, hospitals, guard-houses, and offices, will be made by the Quartermaster's Department, if not otherwise provided by it." The only other furniture enumerated was for offices, which remained "two common desks or tables, six common chairs, one pair common andirons, and shovel and tongs." But at least the Army could now move its furniture without going to the Quartermaster General himself for permission: "Public furniture in barracks and quarters will not be removed from one set to another without the authority of the commanding officer; nor from the station without the orders of the department commander."[21]

There were new procedures for allocation of quarters, and the regulations permitted reducing the space allowance for each company "if it is deemed necessary." If there were not enough quarters available, they were to be divided by lot among the arms (infantry, cavalry, artillery) present at a post. But no troops in place were to be deprived of their quarters because new units had joined a garrison.[22]

The fuel allowance was to be governed by the table offered in the 1855 and 1857 general regulations, except that each six enlisted men in one room received no more than one cord per month from October to April and none at all the rest of the year--they were now to have separate kitchens, which received separate allotments.[23] The space allocation, however, was refined in the new barracks regulations. Each six men in one room were to be accorded "about 324 square feet, or not less than 3,240 cubic feet, of room."[24] But the regulations acknowledged the facts of the Army's economic life: "Necessary repairs of public buildings, not provided for in the appropriations, can only be made by the labor of the troops." The men also had to cut their own firewood.[25]

The bulk of the regulations comprised meticulous drawings and complete materials-and-labor estimating-detail sheets for the construction of all types of buildings; balloon-frame construction was universal. They covered interior detailing features like doors, flooring, even washboards and mantels, although mainly in quantitative terms. But there were no patterns, and no allowance in the estimating-detail sheets, for the construction of bunks, tables, or benches. There were, however, detailed specifications for making floors of mortar and of plaster of paris--of the latter, the regulations said that "no floor is superior"--and for fireplaces and "staining for inside wood work."[26]

Because of the outbreak of the Civil War, the 1860 barracks regulations were never distributed, and it is doubtful that any building exactly conforming to them was ever erected. Where structures incorporating some of their features were built in the 1860s, the regulations offer considerable interpretive value by presenting the currently accepted formulas for items of finish and appearance. But otherwise, even the status of regulations qua regulations is doubtful. For instance, the next revision of the general regulations in 1861 ignored the more generous and refined space allowances set forth in the barracks regulations, content merely to repeat the formulas of the 1855 and 1857 general regulations.[27]

1. 1841 Regulations.

2. Ibid., 15.

3. 1847 Regulations, 27-29, 185.

4. RAGO, Orders and Circulars, RG94.

5. Medical Regulations 1856; ROSG, Abstract of Property Returns, 1858-66, RG112, NA. Gutta percha cloth also was added.

6. 1855 Regulations; 1857 Regulations.

7. 1855 Regulations, 4-5; 1857 Regulations, 124-25. The guard force received more fuel in winter because they needed heat at night as well as during the day, and none in summer because they did not cook.

8. 1857 Regulations, 123.

9. 1855 Regulations, 6; 1857 Regulations, 126.

10. 1855 Regulations, 11; 1857 Regulations, 130. The previous total per man was 11 pounds per month, including the "refreshment." It is not mentioned in the regulations whether the 12 pounds came all at once or in 15-day installments.

11. 1855 Regulations, 15; 1857 Regulations, 134.

12. 1855 Regulations, 15; 1857 Regulations, 133.

13. 1857 Regulations, 15.

14. 1855 Regulations, 6; ibid., 126.

15. 1857 Regulations, 241.

16. Ibid., 126.

17. Barracks Regulations 1860.

18. Ibid., 1.

19. Ibid., 2-3.

20. Barracks Regulations 1860, 4.

21. Ibid., 6.

22. Ibid., 9.

23. Ibid., 10.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., 11.

26. Ibid., 216-69 (barracks), 309-33 (hospitals), 334-51 (guardhouses), 480 (floors and fireplaces), 482 (staining). Pertinent drawings and specifications from the Barracks Regulations 1860 are reproduced in appendixes B, C, and M.

27. 1861 Regulations, 160.

17

WOOLEN, GRAY, WITH LETTERS U.S. IN BLACK
(1861-1865)

The Army entered the Civil War with a new issue of the general regulations, promulgated in 1861.[1] As related to barracks life and contents, they were substantially like the earlier version of 1857. The most interesting minor alteration was the first modification of the candle ration since 1812. Now the allotment was established as 1 pound of sperm candles, or 1¼ pounds of adamantine candles, or 1½ pounds of tallow candles to each 100 rations. In addition, "An issue (extra) of ten pounds of sperm candles, or twelve pounds of adamantine candles, or fifteen pounds of tallow candles per month, may be made to the principal guard of each camp or garrison, on the order of the commanding officer. . . ."[2]

Other changes were very minor. Company commanders were more strongly directed than previously to pay "the utmost attention . . . to the cleanliness of their men, as to their persons, clothing, arms, accoutrements, and equipments, and also as to their quarters or tents."[3] And once again, the permission of the quartermaster general was required to remove furniture from a station.[4] In addition, the blanket was now officially to be of a certain color and size: ". . . woolen, gray, with letters U.S. in black, four inches long, in the centre; to be seven feet long, and five and a half feet wide, and to weigh five pounds."[5]

The regulations were reissued in 1863 without noticeable change affecting barracks and their contents.[6] That volume governed the Army, with only specific modifications rendered by general order, until 1881. No new version of the army regulations appeared for so long because of complex bureaucratic and political wrangling and a general inability to come to grips with the need to redefine the Army as a permanent institution of national defense for a burgeoning industrial republic. Officially, for a full century after the victory at Yorktown, the Army was regulated as an

ad hoc force governed mostly as if it were in the field against the enemy--despite the fact that "field" life for most soldiers was increasingly centered on military posts that, without official blessing, assumed more or less permanent existence. The chief countervailing force against the inertia of indecision was the bureaucratization of the War Department and centralization of procurement standards. As growing numbers of barracks contents became items of general issue instead of local manufacture at the posts, each article in its turn became separately the subject of regulation by general order or action of the secretary of war.

But that occurred chiefly after the Civil War. During that conflict, both regulations and practices governing barracks life and furniture were in practical terms set aside for the duration of the emergency. The war was temporary, so the way the men lived was also temporary. Without actually setting forth regulations, the Quartermaster Department increasingly provided central guidance on the erection and outfitting of barracks and other buildings. It was regulation of action, not of form, but it did the job and set the stage for more thoughtful policy in later years.

The chief effect of the Civil War on barracks furniture for training camps was the virtual elimination of any room contents except the soldiers' personal equipment and the necessary bunks, which were mostly tiered shelves or berths built onto barrack walls, at least in the training camps. The generous size of the Civil War bunks, in a context of minimal accommodations, shows that bunk widths, which had contracted during the 1820s, had since the 1840s expanded to an accepted standard of four feet or more.

In the field, in winter quarters, the life of the soldiers was governed inconsistently by the general regulations, and in practice by the revival of the hutting tradition that dated from the Revolution. Barracks, officially, did not exist during the Civil War and therefore were unregulated in any formal way.[7]

Notes

1. 1861 Regulations.

2. Ibid., Nos. 1191, 1202.

3. Ibid., No. 93

4. Ibid., No. 1087.

5. Ibid., No. 1571.

6. 1863 Regulations.

7. Civil War training barracks are discussed later, and pertinent drawings are set forth in appendix B.

18

AUTHORITY TO CONSTRUCT SUCH BUILDINGS (1866-1880)

With the general regulations of 1863 continuing in force for nearly two decades, it might be assumed that nothing changed officially in the barracks at the military posts. In fact the opposite was the case, and in the decade and a half following the Civil War the quarters of enlisted men were transformed dramatically as a result of official action.

The governance of barracks life could be modified by two means. One was through the issuance of general orders--or actions of the secretary of war, with the same force--that revised one or more paragraphs of the general regulations. The other procedure was the refinement of specifications for articles supplied in barracks, whether or not the items were specifically sanctioned by regulations. The effect in both cases was to expand the inventory of barracks furniture and to establish increasing uniformity throughout the Army.

The first regulation that authorized a general issue of barracks furniture had appeared in 1854, permitting the provision of single iron bedsteads, but it did not require that such articles be furnished. The following year, the new general regulations had said that bedsacks and iron pots "may be provided" to troops in garrison. The next such statement on a specific item came in General Order 58 of July 10, 1869.[1] Instead of permitting or requiring something, this statement outlawed what had never been authorized to begin with--lamps burning volatile oils.

On April 30, 1875, General Order 56 permitted the provision of footlockers for the men at permanent barracks.[2] That order, which was the last one adding to the inventory without presenting more than a general specification, did not actually require the general supply of the footlockers, and they appeared for some time only upon the initiative of officers who requested them. That same year the War Department

instituted the adoption of standards for army stoves and cooking ranges, requiring thereafter that those supplied be of the specified patterns.[3] It also authorized the issue of pillow sacks, which required revision of the regulated monthly straw allowance from 12 to 16 pounds per man.[4]

The last regulatory change that expanded the barracks furniture inventory came in 1878. General Order 118 directed the distribution of new wooden barrack chairs according to an established supply table.[5] That was a significant departure from tradition, for it was the first time that the War Department expressly required that a certain item of furniture, according to specified pattern, be distributed to all barracks without anyone asking for it.

But regulations were not the most important influence on the details of barracks contents. Rather, the refinement of specifications during and after the 1870s and after actually produced, ultimately, a general uniformity throughout the Army. No longer would furniture vary from post to post according to the talents of the men who built it, nor would general issue articles differ from contract to contract. It took many years before this bureaucratic adaptation to national industrialization could transform the insides of all barracks, but the process was well underway by 1880. Some time was also required to refine distinctions between regulations and specifications, but eventually that would happen, and every barrack room would come to look much like every other under the combined influence of the two procedures.

Notes

1. In AGO Oil File.

2. ARQMG 1875, 197.

3. See appendix C.

4. ARQMG 1876, 126.

5. ARQMG 1878, 325-26.